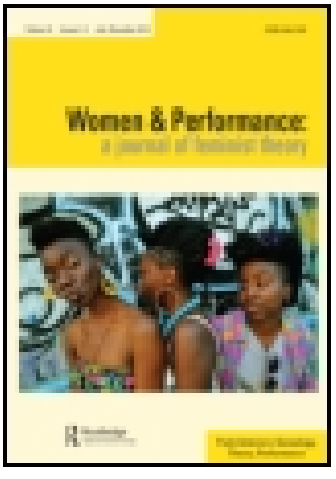
This article was downloaded by: [Queen Mary, University of London]
On: 10 October 2014, At: 02:55
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rwap20

Making Waves: Other Punk Feminisms

Mimi Thi Nguyen

Published online: 12 Dec 2012.

To cite this article: Mimi Thi Nguyen (2012) Making Waves: Other Punk Feminisms, Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory, 22:2-3, 355-359, DOI: 10.1080/0740770X.2012.720895

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0740770X.2012.720895

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory
Vol. 22, Nos. 2–3, July–November 2012, 355–359

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Making Waves[1]: Other Punk Feminisms

Mimi Thi Nguyen*

Downloaded by [Queen Mary, University of London] at 02:55 10 October 2014

In the 1990s, riot grrrl spawned fiercely feminist bands such as Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Heavens to Betsy, and Huggy Bear – "Her Jazz" is in my top ten forever – but feminisms (and proto-feminisms) were not then new to punk. What follows is a briefly annotated and painfully incomplete soundtrack of personal favorites and also representative bands from these other punk feminisms before or contemporaneous with but perhaps outside of the riot grrrl movement (1998 is an arbitrary date to close out this list), which might help us consider alternate genealogies of punk feminisms through anti-imperialism, economic justice, and queer anti-assimilationist politics.

The Pleasure Seekers, "What A Way To Die" (1965)

An anomalous all-girl garage band fronted by a very young Suzi Quatro and her sister. The Detroit-based Pleasure Seekers growled their way through anthems like this one to teenaged drinking. I include it on this list because this song rages.

X-Ray Spex, "Oh, Bondage Up Yours!" (1977)

X-Ray Spex was formed and fronted by the wonderful Day-Glo-clad Poly Styrene (born Marion Elliot-Said), whose resonant vocals on the anti-consumerist "Oh, bondage!" are a lesson in rebellion that reverberates decades later.

The Bags, "We Will Bury You" (1978)

Formed in 1977, the legendary Bags were a first-generation Hollywood punk band formed by the fierce Alicia Armendariz and Pat Morrison, who took on the stage names Alice Bag and Pat Bag. (The band infamously began performing with paper bags over their heads). In 2011, Alice published a must-read memoir called *Violence Girl: From East LA rage to Hollywood stage, a Chicana punk story*.

*Email: mimin@illinois.edu

ISSN 0740–770X print/ISSN 1748–5819 online
© 2012 Women & Performance Project Inc.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0740770X.2012.720895
http://www.tandfonline.com

LiLiPUT, "Hedi's Head" (1978)

Formed in 1978, and formerly known as Kleenex before a lawsuit threatened, this Swiss all-lady punk band produced cacophonous art punk noise with jangling guitars and deadpan delivery (in English and German). Kill Rock Stars released a 24-track CD/DVD of Kleenex/LiLiPUT recordings in 2010.

The Slits, "Typical Girls" (1979)

Oft-cited as a feminist forerunner, The Slits' "Typical Girls" is a discordant – at times poppy, at times trippy – list of the ways "typical girls" are required to be, and to behave. The song's title also lends itself to a long-running listserv about women in punk.

The Raincoats, "Fairytale in the Supermarket" (1979)

The incredibly influential Raincoats formed as an all-woman punk band in 1978, and the anti-normative "Fairytale in the Supermarket" was their first single. I recently saw The Raincoats perform (with Grass Widow), and it was my favorite show of 2011.

Bush Tetras, "Too Many Creeps" (1980)

A New York art punk, no-wave band from the early 1980s, Bush Tetras' lead guitarist Pat Place and singer Cynthia Sley created hypnotically dissonant tracks including "Too Many Creeps," a feminist-tinged agoraphobic tune.

The Ex, "Meanwhile" (1980)

This Dutch band is closest to my dirty punk heart, and their first album *Disturbing Domestic Peace* is forever my jam. The Ex would go on to address all manner of radical politics (including the 1930s Spanish anarchist movement, the uses of "human rights" as justification for liberal war, etc.) and experimental sounds, but the short but devastating "Meanwhile" – about the troubling assumption of safety within heterosexual coupling – grounded this anarcho-punk band in the everyday violations of trust.

Poison Girls, "Persons Unknown" (1980)

Formed in 1976, singer and guitarist Vi Subversa was a mother of two (self-described as "a middle-aged, militant feminist, peacenik, anti fascist, anti capitalist punk") whose raspy, raucous songs for this anarchist punk band explored sexual and gender politics alongside political corruption and predatory capitalism. "Persons Unknown" is a strident call to arms by a punk feminist prophet.

Downloaded by [Queen Mary, University of London] at 02:55 10 October 2014

Au Pairs, "Armagh" (1981)

A British punk/post-punk band formed in 1979, the musically strident and lyrically brilliant Au Pairs released this blistering single in response to allegations of rape and torture of Irish women political prisoners in Armagh, Northern Ireland, skewering the claim that "we don't torture" propagated by "civilized nations."

The Stains, "Waste of Time" (1981)

Not a "real" band, but Corinne Burns' The Stains from the underappreciated film *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Fabulous Stains* (dir. Lou Adler) is nonetheless an amazing proto-feminist entry. In black hose and a sheer red blouse, her eyes outlined in red zig-zags, Diane Lane's Corinne spits out teenaged truths about "adult" femininity to a stone-faced audience at her first show after their performance of the anthem "Waste of Time," against the normative time of waged labor and heterosexuality.

CRASS, "Where Next Columbus?" (1981)

The *Penis Envy* LP is the best album from this perhaps most notorious British anarchist punk band, hands down. Eve Libertine and Joy de Vivre rip their way through the institution of marriage, the wedding-industrial complex, "appropriate" femininity, the hidden economic exchanges that underline the romantic mythology of true love, and, in the incredible "Where Next Columbus?," the masculinist cult of personality in vanguard movements.

Chalk Circle, "Reflection" (1982)

Formed in 1980 in the heart of the Washington D.C. punk scene, this all-woman quartet (featuring the archivist and artist Sharon Cheslow) created angular, minimal sounds and existential questions. In 2011, a 12-song collection of early studio material and live recordings was released.

Conflict (U.S.), "It's Easy" (1983)

Hailing from Arizona, the hardcore band Conflict featured two fierce Asian American women, Karen Nurse (Karen Maeda) and Mariko, on vocals (Mariko also played bass). The album art for their LP *Last Hour* featured ink drawings of famous and familiar images from the last century's wars in Asia.

Hagar the Womb, "Dressed to Kill" (1984)

Featuring an original line-up of all women, Hagar the Womb formed in 1980 London in challenge to the masculinist anarchist scene. Hagar the Womb featured clever vocals and pointed lyrics in songs such as "Dressed to Kill," a poppy critique of compulsory –and competitive – feminine gender presentation.

Downloaded by [Queen Mary, University of London] at 02:55 10 October 2014

Lost Cherrees, "Why Does It Have To Be A Dream" (1984)

The Lost Cherrees was a female-fronted anarcho-punk band from Surrey, England, formed in 1979/80. This track from their brilliant album *All Part of Growing Up* (featuring also songs about rape and feminist refusal to conform to a man's measure) reflects a feminist politics against war and nuclear escalation so popular in Britain at the time (see the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp).

Chumbawamba, "Beginning To Take It Back" (1986)

Long-running British anarchist band Chumbawamba's first album, *Pictures of Starving Children Sell Records*, brought to bear a critique of charity mega-concerts that elided the geopolitical causes of strife and poverty. "Beginning To Take It Back" addresses women's participation in the Nicaraguan revolution and the United States' covert support for the anti-socialist Contras in the 1980s.

Yeastie Girlz, "Orgasm Addict" (1988)

From the *Ovary Action* EP, this Bay Area feminist punk a cappella trio covered the Buzzcocks' classic alongside other sing-song pieces about safer sex and reproductive justice. Yeastie Girlz' Jane Guskin was also a *Maximumrocknroll* contributor, whose monthly columns about the United States' antidemocratic activities throughout the 1980s inspired my own political and intellectual interests in US empire.

The Gits, "Second Skin" (1991)

Based out of Seattle in the early 1990s, the Gits featured the raw, sensual growl of singer Mia Zapata, and the incredibly fierce "Second Skin" presents a tough girl's strength in admitting vulnerability. Zapata's rape and murder in 1993 prompted a radical turn in punk feminisms, inspiring women's self-defense collectives (including Home Alive in Seattle, and Girl Army in Oakland) and compilations (most notably the 1995 release of the double album *Free to Fight!* featuring all-women bands as well as testimonies and self-defense instructions).

DIRT (Dirt Is Reality Today), "Plastic Bullets" (1994)

Formed in 1980, DIRT is another long-running British anarcho-punk band featuring alternating masculine-feminine vocals. From the four-song EP *Scent of the Kill,* "Plastic Bullets" (a cover of anarcho-punk band Belfast's 1987 release) scathingly tackles the British empire's repression of independence movements in Northern Ireland, and specifically the supposedly more "civilized" use of plastic bullets by police forces on protesters.

Downloaded by [Queen Mary, University of London] at 02:55 10 October 2014

God Is My Co-Pilot, "QDA (Anthem)" (1995)

From in New York City in 1991, God Is My Co-Pilot is a queercore noise band whose "QDA (Anthem)" is a raucous, noisy, and totally danceable paean to anti-assimilationist, radical queer politics – and still completely relevant.

Team Dresch, "#1 Chance Pirate TV" (1995)

Formed in 1993, Team Dresch named their first album *Personal Best* after the 1982 lesbionic film featuring women track and field athletes. Co-released on hugely important labels Chainsaw Records (run by bassist Donna Dresch) and Candy Ass Records (run by singer/guitarist Jody Bleyle) in 1995, this astounding album is foundational to the 1990s queercore scene.

Sta-Prest, "Form-fitting" (1998)

This multisubcultural, multiracial queer punk band from '90s San Francisco featured two of my favorite people, Aloofah (a.k.a. Iraya Robles) and D.M. Feelings (a.k.a. Gary Fembot). Experimental, noisily melodic, and otherwise lyrical geniuses, Sta-Prest released a handful of witty singles including "Form-fitting"/"Diffy Peeps" (both songs skewering cultural and subcultural norms of comfort and content) for the Kill Rock Stars 7" Mail Order Freaks Club.

There are so, so many more bands that I could have included. Here are just some, both old and new (with suggestions from Jennifer Allen, LB Johnson, Donna Poole, Marike Seem, Jill Reiter, Iraya Robles, Sarah Roberts, Miriam Wilding, Ken Wissoker, Jessica Wurster, and Francois Villeneuve): A.P.P.L.E., Androids of Mu, A.S.F., Avengers, Bambix, Bitchfight, Blatz, Bound and Gagged, The Brat, Castration Squad, Crazy Band, Delta 5, DISBAND, Dog-Faced Hermans, Dolly Mixture, Emily's Sassy Lime, Erase Errata, The Ex, Finally Punk, Frightwig, G.A.S.H., Grass Widow, Household, Hue & Cry, In School, Kamala and the Karnivores, KUKL, Legal Weapon, Life But How to Live It?, Mary Monday, Mika Miko, Mo-Dettes, Mudwimmin, Naked Aggression, The Need, Neo Boys, Nervous Gender (with Phranc), New Bloods, The Nuns, Ovarian Trolley, Pandoras, Pearl Harbor and the Explosions, Penetration, Raooul, Rubella Ballet, Sado-Nation, Scissor Girls, Shoppers, Skinned Teen, Slant 6, Spitboy, Suburban Lawns, Summer's Eve, A State of Mind, Trash Kit, Third Sex, Tribe 8, Vegas Beat, and Y-Pants.

Note

1. "Making Waves" is the name of a compilation featuring "a collection of 12 women punk bands from the UK," released by Girlfriend Records in 1981. It is also the name of a new zine about punk feminisms (mwzine.tumblr.com).

Downloaded by [Queen Mary, University of London] at 02:55 10 October 2014